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SUBJECT: HIGH-LEVEL GOM SUPPORT FOR NEW CAMPAIGN TO COMBAT VIOLENCE
AGAINST WOMEN

¶1. Summary: The Fourth National Campaign to Fight Violence Against Women was officially launched in Rabat November 27 by the Secretariat of State for Family Affairs, Childhood and the

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Handicapped. The attendance at the launch of the Prime Minister and other key GOM officials underlined strong GOM support and collaboration with the Moroccan women's movement. Participants mapped out a strategy to further integrate judicial and social measures to combat violence against women. End summary.

¶2. The campaign entitled "Toward a Law Against Violence on Women," will be launched on November 27, with a media blitz set to run until December 20, entailing the transmission of TV and radio spots including a documentary on achievements so far in this effort. There will also be a "national sensitization caravan" which will depart from the city of Ouarzazate (500km southeast of Rabat), and move toward two conferences organized by the National Observatory to fight violence against women (which just celebrated its first anniversary), in the cities of Meknes (130km east of Rabat) and Safi (400km South of Rabat). This campaign is receiving funding and technical assistance from UNFPA and the German Technical Aid Agency (GTZ). The most tangible deliverable will be the presentation early next year of a draft bill on the fight of violence against women, intended to complement and strengthen existing laws.

¶3. This year the campaign was opened on November 27 in the presence of several senior members of government including Prime Minister Driss Jettou, Minister of State and Secretary-General of the Istiqlal Party Abbas El Fassi, Minister of Health Mohamed Biadillah, Minister of Communication Nabil Benabdellah, Minister of Social Development, Family, and Solidarity Abderrahim Harouchi, and the Secretary of State in Charge of Family, Childhood and Handicapped

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Affairs Yasmina Baddou. Over a dozen Human Rights and Women NGOs were also represented, such as Union Action Feminin (UAF), Association Marocaine des Droits de l'Homme (AMDH), and Association Marocaine des Droits de la Femme (ADFM).

¶4. This year's campaign launch was also marked by a detailed discussion of the implementation of the national strategy for gender equity and equality in policies and development programs. The event was chaired by PM Driss Jettou, who underlined in his opening remarks that "Morocco has made human rights, in general, and the promotion of women's conditions, in particular, a constant concern and principle objective of all development and reform strategies." PM Jettou also highlighted that Morocco works on respecting its international engagements, pointing out Morocco's decision to lift its the remaining reservations on the UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and to study ways to adhere to its optional protocols.

¶5. State Secretary Yasmina Baddou reviewed during her speech the first statistics ever gathered on violence against women -- collected since the launch on December 23, 2005 of the toll-free number for battered women. She announced that 15,015 complaints of

violence had been registered of which 78 percent of the violence was caused by spouses and 79 percent of the registered victims were housewives. A new event this year was to include street harassment as another form of violence against women. A special TV spot which focuses on this type of harassment was screened at the event and drew high applause from the hundreds of attendees.

¶6. The hotline for battered women (08000 8888) was launched on December 23, 2005 as part of the 3rd national campaign to fight violence against women. The call center runs 7 days a week from 8 am through midnight with 10 operators speaking in Arabic, Berber dialects, and French. The center registers each complaint in a database and offers medical, judicial, and psychological assistance.

Since the center is located in Rabat, it has signed partnership agreements with the Ministries of Justice, Health, National Security, and the Gendarmerie to facilitate service delivery throughout the country.

¶7. Partnership agreements have been also signed with NGOs where victims are sent for orientation. The center has also created social assistance cells in all first instance courts to host women victims and the similar facilities are being placed in police stations (so far these exist in Rabat, Tangier, Fez, Meknes, and Agadir.) Other assistance centers are being established in the main public health facilities (they have already been established in Rabat, Casablanca, and Marrakech) but due to limited funds, the remaining eleven centers in health facilities will be created in already existing centers located in public hospitals for abandoned and physically abused children.

¶8. Comment: The character of the November 27 conference, and the follow up plans that have been laid out, are indicative of the significant material and political support the Moroccan women's movement receives from the top levels of the GOM. The conference was also showcased the growing maturity and evolution of the movement as a self-sustaining force in Moroccan civil society.

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